

## Critical Attributes of Analytical Writing

In analytical writing, the writer:

Focuses on a *topic, issue, or problem* that is clearly identified and defined. The focus is typically something external to the writer, a subject of general, public, or group interest, even if personal experience and expression figure in the piece.

Establishes a *purpose* for writing that extends from and justifies its focus. For writer and reader, something is at stake: some outcome, decision, judgment, course of action, way of understanding. In some cases, analytical writing seeks to persuade readers to take some action or accept some thesis, position, interpretation, conclusion, or recommendation.

Engages in *analytical thinking*, approaching a subject by reducing it to constituent parts or features, examining their makeup, determining how they interrelate, and situating the whole in some context.

Explains *relationships*, not just listing but rather connecting parts of a whole, aspects of a phenomenon, elements of an argument, etc. Makes use of analytical strategies such as comparison/contrast, cause and effect, weighting and ranking, or drawing inferences in order to accomplish the purpose. Conclusions drawn from analysis lead to and dictate the writer's choice of thesis, interpretation, or recommendation.

Strives for *depth* in considering the subject and sustaining a discussion; goes beyond what's obvious and proverbial about the topic at hand.

Demonstrates awareness of *audience*; maintains an appropriate tone; provides for and anticipates response by acknowledging differing viewpoints, addressing reasonable questions, providing requisite information and evidence, explaining and elaborating ideas, locating points of significance, drawing appropriate conclusions, etc.

Offers *support*—specific, relevant, and credible—for ideas, claims, and conclusions advanced. Support reflects close attention to the subject, familiarity with relevant information, and (as appropriate) a broad range of reading sufficient to the purpose.

Effectively and correctly integrates *source materials* (if used) to support the writer's ideas and purposes; summarizes and/or paraphrases information, selects significant passages to quote, and incorporates quoted materials in the discussion; recognizes the need not only to convey information but also to interpret and respond to source material.

Evinces a sense of *ownership*, of individual interest in and responsibility for the project at hand, even when making reference to ideas and information offered by others.

Develops the piece through an *organization or structure* that is logical and consistent, with transitions and stages clearly indicated. As appropriate, observes formal conventions of a given genre: report, technical article, proposal, review, literary analysis, etc.

Selects words carefully for meaning; writes concisely, clearly.

Constructs grammatical, effective sentences.

Observes standard conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, documentation, etc.

This list of attributes was generated at the Kentucky Department of Education by high school teachers, university/college professors, and representatives from groups interested in education.

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